



It's Game Time for Playoff Ticket Scams

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MADISON – With the NFL playoffs underway and the Super Bowl just around the corner, the already-high demand for postseason tickets is rising. A new round of scams is targeting Packers fans looking to buy, sell or show off their playoff tickets. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) asks ticket holders to protect their passes from scammers.

In the latest “big game” ticket fraud, scammers are stealing and reusing information from images of tickets posted for sale online. When a picture of a ticket is posted on the internet with the bar code showing, it is easy for counterfeiters to steal the ticket information for use in creating fake passes. If you are going to post a photo online to help sell your tickets (or brag about them on your social media account), always use a photo editor to blur the bar code in the image.

If you are looking to buy or sell a postseason ticket, use the NFL-sanctioned ticket exchange or a third-party exchange that will guarantee the validity of tickets, such as StubHub. Fake ticket offers often appear on Craigslist and in other classified advertisements, and there is no way of knowing if a well-designed counterfeit ticket is real until game time. If you buy a ticket that is reported lost or stolen, you will be denied entry into the stadium. DATCP strongly encourages fans to buy tickets from businesses or people they know and trust whenever possible.

Legitimate NFL tickets are printed on thick, heavy paper with barcodes, holograms, custom laser cutouts and a specially-made gloss varnish. In addition, the NFL says the tickets include heat sensitive graphics that disappear with the touch of a thumb.

Consumer Protection offers these tips to avoid becoming a victim of ticket fraud:

- Potential buyers should ask the seller to e-mail or fax them a copy of the actual tickets before making a payment. Make sure the ticket information includes the correct date, time, location and seating details. Also, verify that the seating information is suitable for the stadium where game is played. The seller in this situation should blur or obscure the bar code in the email or fax so that it is not reused for a counterfeit ticket.
- Use a credit card rather than cash, check or debit card to purchase tickets since it may provide some protection if you do not receive the tickets.
- Do not give out your credit card number, online or over the phone, unless you are sure the seller is legitimate.
- Do not buy tickets from sellers on the street near the venue. These scalpers are unlicensed and unregulated and may be selling stolen or counterfeit tickets.
- Try to deal with "official" sources for tickets such as those endorsed by the team or those that are members of the National Association of Ticket Brokers. These businesses carefully screen ticket offers and take measures to protect consumers from ticket fraud.
- If you are looking to purchase a playoff travel package, verify that the travel agent with whom you are dealing is a member of a recognized trade association such as the American Society of Travel Agents.

For additional information or to file a complaint, visit the Consumer Protection Bureau at <http://datep.wisconsin.gov>, send an e-mail to datep hotline@wisconsin.gov or call the Consumer Protection Hotline toll-free at 1-800-422-7128.

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